

\$10

YOUR DONATION DIRECTLY BENEFITS THE VENDORS. PLEASE BUY ONLY FROM BADGED VENDORS.



GROUNDCOVER

NEWS AND SOLUTIONS FROM THE GROUND UP | WASHTENAW COUNTY, MICH.

*Vendor
Voices*

Groundcover vendors share their views and experiences.

Welcome to this special edition

GROUNDCOVER STAFF

Each year, in addition to the regular monthly issues, Groundcover News publishes one or two special editions, or anthologies, bringing together outstanding materials from our archives that center around a particular theme. Past Groundcover anthologies include *Women's Voices* (Fall 2018), *Susan Beckett and the Story of Groundcover News* (Spring 2018) and *Vendor Entrepreneurship* (Fall 2017).

The present special edition, *Vendor Voices*, showcases works by and about our vendors published over the past two years.

Read on, and you will discover that Groundcover vendors are not merely salespeople, not just economic outliers looking to get back on their feet. They are also remarkable individuals from markedly diverse backgrounds, each with valuable perspectives on life and society. The real outliers here are such perspectives; it is only with street newspapers like Groundcover News that these important voices have an opportunity to be heard by the mainstream.

Ours is an increasingly insulated culture. Despite the globalizing promises of the internet and social media, most of us find ourselves more and more ensconced in our respective "confirmation bubbles," largely oblivious to what life is like, and looks like, for individuals and groups outside our shrinking vantage point. If we wish to understand and engage the world fully, we must be willing to seek out and learn from different perspectives. *Vendor Voices* provides one such entry point into expanding our horizons of awareness to include and embrace a richer, fuller view of life and society.

We hope you enjoy. ●

It takes a village; we can build it

KEN PARKS

Groundcover vendor No. 233

We live on Turtle Island, the indigenous name for this land. America was imposed on this "New World." On a global map it runs from the Atlantic to the Pacific and from the Arctic to the Antarctic. The United States of America may be called "the other America." The Monroe Doctrine is part of that story. Toussaint Louverture, Simon Bolivar, Jose Marti and Fidel Castro all played important roles in that saga.

And all indigenous people know the story well. Other Americans know the United States better than it knows itself; certainly, better than the United States knows them.

Books are written on the rise of capitalism and the European flight from that terror. A library collection on the growth of colonial capitalism into the imperialism of World War I would sit next to the collection on the socialist revolutions, the Great Depression, fascism and the Cold War. Our current studies would look at the financialization of everything, best explained as neoliberal imperialism and the global campaign to speed up the extraction and consumption of every resource. Your time is the ultimate resource to commodify. Non-stop busyness, and vast accumulations of what may well be imaginary capital, are a kind of fetish that destroys life.

We can do better. The struggle to summarize, draw conclusions and make decisions is key to our experiment on this earth.

Take a breath and imagine the reality we share. This precious human birth and the possibility of freedom. You shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free. This very breath is the key. It takes a village to raise a child. From each according to their ability, to each according to their need.

Time to take a breath. Inhale and exhale. If you can sit in good posture and count 21

**All our ancestors are in
our bones inspiring us to
be bold and brave with
great love for the people
and all our relations.**

breaths, you are a star. Mind training, in stillness and in motion, has healing power that brings us to the unity of body, speech and mind. In everyday life, any sense of unease can be a message to take a natural breath. That can become a wonderful habit. I am still working on it. When we move from awareness of breath to awareness of mind, we take a qualitative leap. We can discover our ability to share and create. We may put old ideas of compliance to the side. Chain-of-command thinking may be replaced by consensus. Council fires and ceremonies of respect will become popular. Dignity and discipline will be among the highest virtues. Working together with good purpose becomes a way of life.

All our ancestors are in our bones inspiring us to be bold and brave with great love for the people and all our relations.

Consider Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: the right to a decent standard of living. The basic human needs described therein are all important, but I want to focus on food and shelter. Healthy, nourishing food and shelter from fear are the foundation for an ecovillage that would be built on land. On this earth. We have some way to go. A journey of one thousand miles begins with one step. ●

Originally published in Groundcover News August 2019

Equity: from policy to implementation under women's watchful eyes



WILL SHAKESPEARE
Groundcover vendor No. 253

A person begins to die a slow death, the moments he/she keeps silent on things that matter.

— Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

A healthy community is the one that meets the basic needs of its residents. More than a generation ago, Washtenaw County government officials were talking about equity solutions to the socio-economic gaps between Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti. De-industrialization, plant closings and community abandonment of the 1980s and the post-war era had severe impacts in Ypsilanti. Women in leadership positions within county government have spurred their male colleagues to support an equity policy ordinance, along with a program office for effective implementation, evaluation and future adjustments.

Washtenaw County suffers from serious disparities in health, housing, income, employment, recreational and educational opportunities. In 2018, Washtenaw County was the top

Michigan county in factors leading to healthy outcomes, yet it ranked fourth in actual outcomes because all people do not have access to the same opportunities. It ranks 81 out of 83 counties in income disparity within the county and Ann Arbor is the eighth most economically segregated city in the nation.

Health outcomes often reflect the economic disparities. The 2018 county rankings showed that "black babies in Washtenaw County are nearly twice as likely to be born at a low birth weight as white babies. Black children are nearly six times more likely and Hispanic children three times more likely to grow up in poverty than their white peers." The Washtenaw County Opportunity Index also showed that there is a nine-year difference in life expectancy between Ann Arbor's 48104 zip code and Ypsilanti's 48198 zip code. White people who live in Ann Arbor have a life expectancy of 86. Life expectancy for black people in Ann Arbor is 10 years shorter than their white counterparts.

Dr. Jessie Kimbrough Marshall, Medical Director of the Washtenaw Health Department, observed that "differences in the social, economic and physical environment across Washtenaw County can help explain differences in Quality of Life (QOL) and health outcomes that we see among us."

The women of the Washtenaw County government did not keep silent. They wanted action now, and an



Key members of the Equity Action/Implementation Team: Teresa Gillotti, Diane Heidt, Ellen Rabinowitz, Linda Edwards-Brown, Anna Lemler, Derrick Jackson. Photo: Kolin Biggs

equity policy initiative has come to fruition. On September 5, 2018, the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners voted to formally adopt a Washtenaw County Equity Policy and fund a Racial Equity Department. Anna Lemler – Washtenaw County's Racial Analyst – and a Racial Equity Officer for whom a job was posted in December, will work with other County departments to uncover implicit bias in their behaviors and the institutional and structural racism reflected in their policies and practices.

"As of now, our focus is on setting up an office within the county that has resources, authority and capacity, in addition to being accessible for, and driven by, community members," said Lemler.

Conversations with impacted neighborhoods have been taking place so that resident concerns and observations are taken into account when policies and guidelines are formulated. Ellen Rabinowitz, Washtenaw Health Plan Executive Director and Washtenaw County Health Officer said, "We want to keep hearing from our community partners and community members. A significant part of our work is about listening – and being willing to change. It's about bringing community members' lived experiences into decision-making and to the allocation of the resources that are intended to help."

Linda Edwards-Brown, Washtenaw

See EQUITY page 14 ➡

GROUNDCOVER

Mission

Creating opportunity and a voice for low-income people while taking action to end homelessness and poverty.

Susan Beckett — publisher

Jim McBee — managing editor
Andrew Nixon — editor

This month's contributors

Paula Anderson
Marshall Averill
Pauline Burnat
Lyndsey Collier
La Shawn Courtwright
Christopher Ellis
Cindy Gere
Elizabeth "Lit" Kurtz
Tabitha L.
Ken Parks
Will Shakespeare
Sandra S.
Kevin Spangler
Robert W.

Office volunteers

Peter Beyer
Lindsay Calka
Shreya Chakravarthy
Gerry Charbeneau
Glenn Gates
Robert Klingler
Jon MacDonagh-Dumler
Lucy Miller
Sandy Schmoker
Nolan Smith
Mary Wisgerhof
Andrea Zaghi

Story and photo submissions

submissions@groundcovernews.com

Advertising

contact@groundcovernews.com

Contact us

groundcovernews.org
facebook.com/groundcover
twitter.com/groundcovernews
Office: 423 S. 4th Ave., Ann Arbor
P: 734-263-2098

Ann Arbor's new police chief, Michael Cox, proclaims strong support for Groundcover

There are about 100 street newspapers around the world, about half of them in the United States. Whenever I hear of one of the few cities that has a street paper, my antenna immediately goes up in recognition. Such was the case when Ann Arbor announced that its new police chief, Michael Cox, is from Boston, where *Spare Change* is sold.

I attended the first of two "meet and greets" on Oct. 10 at Pittsfield Elementary School to make certain Chief Cox was aware that Boston and Ann Arbor have street papers in common.

As a welcoming gesture, I presented Cox with our two special editions and



ELIZABETH "LIT" KURTZ
Groundcover vendor No. 159

the current month's issue and took the opportunity to share with him the vital role that the paper plays in the lives of those who lack mainstream housing.

He not only accepted the current edition but offered a generous tip which I had not expected. He also welcomed a meeting between officers and vendors in order to strengthen communications.

I used the opportunity to let him know that Groundcover News (like all street papers) not only provides a source of income for vendors but offers timely and relevant stories and information about the struggles of those living with housing instability.

From *Spare Change* in Boston to *Sacramento Sheets*, from *Groundcover News* to *The Contributor* in Nashville, Tenn., the streetpaper concept

bridges the gap between the housed and the unhoused. Through these papers, our communities and their leaders can bridge the gap between these too-often disconnected communities.

I was extremely proud and honored to introduce the street paper concept to our chief of police, Michael Cox. The City of Ann Arbor not only has a new police chief but a new Groundcover customer. ●

Originally published in Groundcover News November 2019

When shall we overcome homelessness?

ELIZABETH “LIT” KURTZ
Groundcover vendor No. 159

While this month Americans across the nation celebrate the birth of the man whose message of peace ended the last legal strains of racial bondage in this country, the shackles of homelessness remain hidden from view with a nation remaining persistently oblivious to the crisis.

I recall a couple years back when large groups filed into Hill Auditorium to attend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. ceremony events. Church and school buses unloaded while ticket holders came from every direction towards the building. I stood near the entrance eager to distribute the latest issue of Groundcover News.

Yet, people from all races, nationalities, sexual orientations and economic strata passed up the offer to purchase the street paper, perhaps this community's only viable means of authentic engagement with members of the homeless population. Only a handful of people headed towards the auditorium recognized my plight. The rest passed by, ignoring, gazing (perhaps intentionally) into the

distance.

The name of the paper, Groundcover News, is indicative of its purpose. The street paper is a business model that offers those who are literally and figuratively on the ground a means to reenter society in a dignified, self-sufficient manner. Like dozens of street papers around the world in different cities, Groundcover News seeks to bridge the gap of misunderstanding between those who have no housing and those who are housed.

So, I was disheartened that Millennials strode past me with the same indifference as their older counterparts, signaling little change among the upcoming generations in the perception of homelessness. The dichotomy is glaring. While Dr. King promoted peace, we still live in a country where thousands of Americans suffer from what has been called the “violence of hunger.”

It seems as though the spirit of the movement has receded further and further into the distance and that symbolism threatens to replace genuine concern for our suffering neighbors. The ubiquitous pattern of people walking by

those who are suffering on the streets remains embedded in our culture, with thousands seeing no end in sight to their daily suffering.

While civil rights victories have expanded in recent decades to be more inclusive, unhoused citizens still lack basic legal protections. These include protection against hate crimes, housing discrimination and employment.

As it stands now, no funding has sufficiently provided for the year-round emergency shelter which is the direst need for a person experiencing housing vulnerability. Inextricably linked to a person without adequate housing is hunger, which registers on the faces of citizens of the urban landscape something akin to the gaunt faces usually associated with the world's most materially impoverished regions.

Our attempts to feed those who lack housing is certainly not aligned with our abundance. Hunger ministries strive to supplement the scarcity of nutrients the unhoused person lacks by providing green salads and nutritional supplements like Ensure. But from youth to the elderly, this population's diet falls far

short of recommended standards.

As I bear witness to this crisis, there is no doubt in my mind that if Dr. King were alive today, he would join forces with the current-day food and agriculture organization Nobel Laureates, who recently expressed the sentiment that “Peace is impossible without food security, and there will be no food security without peace.”

So, I dare to dream that by this time next year, we will have moved closer to bridging the gap between those in society who enjoy food and housing security and those who do not. I dare to dream that society will recognize that, while we continue to commemorate the victory of desegregation, in fact our work is far from over. Indeed, the time is overdue that we apply the ageless anthem of “We Shall Overcome” to this crisis we call homelessness. ●

Originally published in Groundcover News January 2019



Helping marginalized populations by reducing terms of trespass orders

WILL SHAKESPEARE
Groundcover vendor No. 258

On Jan. 9, 2019, the City of Ann Arbor Human Rights Commission discussed racial profiling, harassment, trespassing, due process, discrimination, public accommodation and membership requirements for the new Independent Community Police Oversight Commission.

The AAHRC commissioners invited Ann Arbor Interim Police Chief Bob Pfannes and Senior Assistant City Attorney Arianne Slay for a formal presentation and discussion of trespassing, about which a complaint had reached the 15th Judicial District Court. During the questions and answers period, Commissioner Linda Winkler wanted to know if one-year trespasses at the Ann Arbor District Library and the Ann Arbor Area Transportation Authority violate the city's Public Accommodation Act. Pfannes and Slay were helpful in clarifying the issues and regulations.

Former longtime Commissioner Chair Dwight Wilson and most of the other Commissioners expressed their belief that a one-year trespass is punitive. Wilson stated that, in his opinion, a

six-month trespass is more reasonable. City Council member Ali Ramlawi, also a member of the commission, suggested that AADL and AAATA should not trespass customers for more than six months but wanted private businesses to have the option of a one-year trespass. Commission Chair Leslie Stanburgh guided the commission to further discuss related issues such as mental health, Freedom of Information Act requests, gender, race, discrimination, police trespass statistics, diversity, reform and the appeal process.

The AAHRC meeting was a significant victory for the area's marginalized populations: Commissioners agreed to send a proposal to the City Council to pass an ordinance that will reduce the current one-year police trespass to a six-month trespass for public facilities such as the library and the buses. ●

Originally published in Groundcover News February 2019



Oblivious

CHRISTOPHER ELLIS
Groundcover contributor

There seems to be a
Hole between the things of
Our happiness,
A bubble unseen multiplied
Millions of times an
Infinitesimal carrier.

Transporting shields surrounding inside
worlds and mundane
Things. existences
so far so near
Drinks on cup of coffee
Rain on hurried footsteps

Soccer balls on children in 8 a.m. out by five
Brides are smiling
Faces on a coffin
Sameness indifferent to
Sameness
Bubbles never touching
Float on pass
Expode! the individual myth
The individual is dying
Is tired to the suffering theater
This clothing is tired and unwashed is- nude
Nude
Nude
Nude.

Originally published in Groundcover News July 2019

Ann Arbor's new trespassing law is a good step

ELIZABETH “LIT” KURTZ
Groundcover vendor No. 159

Several deadlines to end homelessness have come and gone in the city of Ann Arbor. Disappointingly, none were met with complete success and there is little indication that they will be in the near future. However, City Council passed a new trespassing ordinance on Feb. 4 that promises a light at the end of the tunnel.

Trespass orders are made by police when a person is no longer welcome on the premises. A violation of a trespass order used to trigger a warrant, which often led to jail time while the case made its way through the courts. The new ordinance allows Ann Arbor police to instead make trespass violations civil infractions.

The recognition that trespassing is a symptom of larger, more complex social or personal ailments may be one of the necessary changes that result in the grinding down of the pernicious homelessness crisis. “Jailing people for trespassing isn’t helping them,” Arienne Slay, senior assistant city attorney, told MLive in February.

In the absence of a year-round day

shelter, people often occupy libraries and other spaces as a refuge from the elements. The consequences of an individual being trespassed from these areas can have lasting effects and lower the likelihood of a person's rehabilitation and recovery.

There is little doubt that the emotional trauma of an individual experiencing hardship or housing instability may cause them to conduct themselves inappropriately. Banning an individual from these areas not only takes away a vital service but increases the likelihood of more trouble for that person down the line.

The MLive article, “Ann Arbor approves new approach to prosecuting trespassers,” further revealed that trespassing results in lengthy legal problems involving court appearances and marks on one's record, which can undermine a person's journey to healing and recovery. Having been personally subjected to trespass and seen friends go through it, I know it creates fear and suspicion, plus distrust of the very institutions charged with aiding in one's recovery.

Not only does the new city ordinance improve due process for individuals

who are trespassed, the potential benefits of this change may prove to be invaluable in the long run, as it is one of the rare policies that focus on empowering a person rather than punishing them.

“We are here to help people,” Slay said. She and the council members who sponsored the ordinance understand that there is a need to stop feeding the vicious cycle that trespassing crimes create. Ann Arbor's changes to trespassing policy hold great possibilities in helping detangle at least one of the obstacles that contribute to chronic homelessness.

City Council's vote shortens the trespassing process and offers the opportunity to have a trespass expunged from one's record. It ushers in support services such as literacy, which is particularly promising. According to Vitanna.org, a personal finance blog, “When someone receives more education, they are less likely to commit a crime and are more likely to earn a living wage.”

Slay is convinced that by giving the City control over the trespassing process, individuals will be connected with services that the city can provide

and avoid the prosecution associated with the prosecutor's office. City officials said “the goal is not to punish people, but to make the court process simpler and to better connect offenders with supportive resources,” according to MLive.

It is refreshing that, as we move further into the 21st century, more agencies embrace a method often used in education called positive behavior support, which can allow for better outcomes. The recognition that punishing people for trespassing when they are most vulnerable is counterproductive will help to give those experiencing the devastating effects of homelessness access to the tools needed to emerge from it. This is a significant first step and a crucial part of the puzzle to bringing the homelessness crisis to an end. No deadlines are promised, but a commitment to equip people with the services they need may be the formula to fade this centuries-old quandary into the distance. ●

Originally published in Groundcover News April 2019

World Homeless Day and more – a note from Lit

ELIZABETH “LIT” KURTZ
Groundcover vendor No. 159

After surfing the Internet in August and learning about the internationally observed World Homeless Day, my excitement inspired me to design a t-shirt and begin planning ways to mark October 10, 2018, in our local community. Since its 2010 founding, World Homeless Day has been observed in several dozen countries on every continent except Antarctica.

Having experienced homelessness firsthand, I feel compelled to come together with others like me and try to share our experiences with the world. Despite my initial sense of urgency, the month of September whizzed by and besides collecting some emails in my initial excitement, I had little energy to focus on the project.

I am also still working diligently to complete my book. I was incredibly humbled by having one of my articles nominated as one of the top six for Best Vendor Contribution at the International Street Paper Conference in Greece in 2016.

Since then I've set my goals on compiling selected articles into a book of

essays while providing context as to what motivated me to write them. I cannot say thank you enough to the people who sponsored a day or more for my book endeavor.

The days that were gifted have helped me gain some traction and better focus. I still have some days to go, but I am confident that enough people will come through to make this a reality.

To give some perspective, a day sponsorship will offer me the additional freedom needed to focus on my book project. As it stands, each day I spend selling papers to keep my hotel accommodations is a day away from the project. To have 21 days sponsored will give me about three weeks to focus on my goal and minimize the time I need to sell papers the papers to meet my expenses.

I also have plans for an EP (short form of an album) in the works. My social media sites are starting to demand more of my time and I can with confidence say that I am a budding videographer.

But there is no question that the world, country, state and our local communities need to set aside time to

strategize, plan and renew our commitment to ending the crisis of homelessness.

So, I have redesigned the t-shirt to better represent the homelessness awareness theme for 2018. It not only features the October 10 daylong observance, but now also includes the weekly observance during the month of November. I hope you will purchase a tee and wear it during the months of October and November.

In Baby Boomer speak, I have a lot of irons in the fire. But each of those irons is important and I hope you will find one or more ways to connect with me. Living without conventional housing, I have been forced to recognize my limitations, financially and emotionally, but I am convinced that each of my goals is attainable.

To find out more about how you can order a t-shirt or stay in the know about my other activities, please do a Google search of my website: As the Third World in North America Turns. It is a good starting place to get to know more about who I am and my many ideas, plans and goals for ending the homelessness crisis for me and the world. And, in every language ... Thank

you for your generosity and support!

Remember, World Homeless Day on October 10 is something you can point to on the calendar each year and use to make a significant difference in your local community. Educate people about homelessness issues, celebrate and support local good works and highlight local issues for the community. Try to engage schools, churches, local business, service clubs and your own place of employment. ●

Originally published in Groundcover News October 2018



MEET YOUR VENDOR

**Sandra S., vendor No. 233****In one sentence, who are you?**

I'm a Groundcover News vendor that is involved in many other activities.

Where do you normally sell Groundcover?

In the Quaker church [Ann Arbor Friends Meeting House].

When and why did you start selling Groundcover?

In January 2015, because I needed to make quick cash type of income at the moment.

What's your favorite thing about selling Groundcover?

My favorite thing about selling the Groundcover is when I get to interact with a potential buyer and especially when we talk about the articles I've written.

What's something our readers should know?

That thanks to this publication, a lot of vendors just like me have been able to overcome their struggles with homelessness, and being able to maintain housing as well, when only receiving low-income wages otherwise.

What's the most interesting thing that's ever happened to you while selling Groundcover?

I've met people that, noticing I have good people skills, try to recruit me to go work for them.

How would you like to see Ann Arbor / Washtenaw County change for the better?

I'd like if the developmental ideas of transforming publicly owned sites to build and offer affordable housing becomes a fact in the near future. ●

Originally published in Groundcover News October 2019



Is it traumatic to be homeless? Picture the treatment options

SANDRA S.

Groundcover vendor No. 233

I have studied psychology for a while, and it appears the experts don't consider homelessness traumatic. You hear professionals say that being in combat creates trauma. Or perhaps you might read in a psychology book that being a victim of sexual assault creates trauma, or being present at a natural disaster might have some aftereffects in the onset of trauma. However, trauma as a consequence of homelessness is never mentioned in the textbook assigned for a course I took in abnormal psychology.

The book we used was called "Understanding Abnormal Behavior" by David Sue, et al. The course was about learning the psychiatric diagnoses that are current in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition. In the chapter on trauma and stressor-related disorders, homelessness is not listed as a trigger to experiencing trauma. What they categorize as exposure to traumatic events are: unexpected death of a close friend or loved one, another's life-threatening event, witnessing family violence, unwanted sexual attention or contact, severe injury (to self or someone else), motor vehicle accident, threat to one's life, stalking, childhood physical abuse and partner violence. They also did a case study of a veteran diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder, and another case study of a woman diagnosed with acute stress disorder after having experienced natural disasters.

I haven't had the privilege to publish a book, so who am I to criticize? But since the cause of Groundcover is to help the homeless community and since I have been homeless myself, I just feel it is important for me to share my opinion on this. As someone who has experienced homelessness and as someone who has seen it happen to others, pretty closely in some of my fellow Groundcover vendors, I just think that we have been affected mentally and react to certain situations in life, in the same way a person diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder might react.

I don't think we need a pat on our back from a psychologist. That's not what matters. What matters is the type of treatment we might qualify for only if we are diagnosed. Without treatment, we can't get better. Without getting better, what is the chance we can overcome homelessness and stay housed for good?

Whatever the psychology manuals say or don't, I believe trauma is trauma — and homelessness can definitely be traumatic. Below are several treatment options for trauma-related diagnosis I've learned about that could be helpful to anyone who's experienced trauma — including, in my opinion, homelessness.

Based on what I learned, certain antidepressants show moderate effect in changing serotonin levels and reducing the reactivity of the

amygdala (a structure deep in the brain that's critical to emotional learning) and desensitizing the fear network. The authors talk about other medications like D-cyclosporine, which decreases the intensity of fear felt by a person with PTSD. They talk about Prazosin, which can reduce the nightmares people with PTSD experience. And they talk about "Propranolol, a beta-blocker believed to reduce memory consolidation of a recent trauma (if given within 6 hours of the event)."

Other treatments include cognitive behavioral therapy, which helps patients identify and change dysfunctional thinking in relation to the traumatic event and their beliefs about themselves. Sometimes a trauma patient thinks they are to blame for what happened, or they deny they are worthy. Cognitive behavioral therapy helps them substitute healthier thinking.

And last, there is another form of therapy called eye movement desensitization and reprocessing. With EMDR, the patient "visualizes their traumatic experience while following a therapist's fingers moving from one side to side." The therapist prompts the patient to change the negative thoughts in relation to the negative experience with positive thoughts. That way, they end up detaching from negative emotions, substituting them with more adaptive considerations of the trauma.

Because trauma is often mixed with physical medical conditions, such as heart disease, high blood pressure, migraines and asthma, there also exists the treatment of psychophysiological disorders. These are mainly relaxation and biofeedback training.

After relaxation training, the patient "acquires the ability to relax the muscles of the body under almost any circumstances." The patient is instructed to focus on one set of muscles at a time — first tensing tightly each muscle for 10 seconds and then relaxing the same muscle they were working on.

Biofeedback is "a self-regulation technique that allows people to alter physiological processes in order to improve physical or mental health." In biofeedback training, a therapist offers instruction on how a patient can voluntarily control a physiological function like heart rate or blood pressure. During training, the patient receives constant feedback regarding a specific physiological activity. For example, blood pressure might be visually represented while the patient learns to maintain it in the desired range.

If you don't have current access to the types of treatment mentioned here, but you have experienced homelessness in the recent past, it might be worth finding out what you can do about it, especially if you feel it is bringing you down. Happy October to you! ●

Originally published in Groundcover News October 2019

My quest for spirituality in recovery

SANDRA S.

Groundcover vendor No. 233

You might recognize me from my last few articles. I feel honored if you've read them. As I have mentioned, I am a recovering alcoholic and wouldn't have recovered without the aid of Alcoholics Anonymous. In AA, I learned I need a spiritual solution and that I must come to believe in a higher power. This month I wanted to share my experience developing a faith in something bigger than me. I must admit it hasn't been limited to spirituality, but I have relied on the religion I grew up with: Catholicism.

I'm not a "good" Catholic, however. I hardly ever go to mass or confession. I don't read the Bible, either. Being that I don't go to mass often, I don't take communion too often. And when I do, I doubt I recently confessed my sins to an actual priest before communion.

However, I do believe in God. And he's not a punishing God. He will not punish me if I don't attend mass regularly. He accepts my mistakes and forgives me when I ask for forgiveness in my private prayers. Plus, I like to think I don't sin too often, as I prefer to avoid having to make amends later.

The AA program has not been an easy journey for me. I don't really get comfort meditating and I find it a little hard to believe in the souls or spirits of our bodies as something separate. I think we are just flesh that rots when we die. I don't think my spirit will stick around after I die. Therefore, I don't really understand how spirituality works or what's expected of me to experience spiritual growth. Religion seemed an easier approach for me to develop a stronger faith in a higher power. So this is what I've done.

During the fall of 2017, I joined Alpha, a 13-week course offered by Christ the King Catholic Church in Ann Arbor. This course taught me the way to God is Jesus Christ. It taught me there's evidence that Jesus Christ existed for real and that he is our savior. It taught me about the Holy Spirit and the Bible.

I understand I might scare some people away when I talk about Jesus Christ. But let me tell you a little story I heard in the first session of Alpha.

Most of us have big life questions, like: Where am I headed? Why am I here? Is there more to life than this? It is not often that we sit down to think about these important questions. Alpha has given me space to question these things openly with the fellows who attended with me, and there has been no judgment at all about anyone's beliefs. As a matter of fact, Alpha is there for people who want to understand the meaning of life and faith but might not identify as believers or Christians.

According to the first session of Alpha, it is Jesus Christ who gives meaning to our big questions. Jesus said, "I'm the bread of life" (John 6:35) — in other words, a relationship with him fulfills the longing everybody has in

their hearts. Jesus claims to be the one who can satisfy that spiritual hunger.

In the first Alpha video about finding answers to our big question "is there more to life than this?" they referred to successful actors, comedians and singers to show that success is not the answer. Freddy Mercury, lead singer of the band Queen, said in an interview before his death, "You can be everything in the world, and success may bring you a fortune, and still be the loneliest man." He suggested his fame and career prevented him from having what he needed the most — a loving and ongoing relationship.

Jesus also said, "I'm the way, the truth and the life" (John 14:6). Ultimately there's only one relationship that is totally loving and goes on forever, and that's a relationship with God — and Jesus said, "I am the way to that relationship."

Jim Carrey was another actor the video quoted. "I wish that everyone could get rich and famous and have everything they ever dreamed of, so they would know that that's not the answer."

If you care to look for and find answers, you might discover that there's evidence of Jesus' life, teachings, death and resurrection, too. Many scientists over the centuries have been believers. Some of them are Descartes, Newton, Kepler, Galileo, Locke, Copernicus, Faraday, Kelvin and Pasteur.

But when Jesus said "I'm the truth," he meant more than the intellectual truth. It's not the same to rely on the intellectual truth as to experience the personal truth. What that means is that it's different to know Jesus from your head than from your heart — not only examining the truth but experiencing a relationship with him.

When we do things that aren't right, the wonderful news is that God loves us and forgives us. God gave his only son to die for you and me and, overall, for our sins (for the forgiveness we get). On the cross, he took all of our guilt and cleansed our souls from the regrets so we could live life at its fullest.

Most of us don't want to live life alone; we long for a light inside. And Jesus claims to be that light. He's like a crutch that helps us stand firmer. He helps us gain strength when we feel weak. Jesus picks us up. When I read about Jesus, I saw that he was everything that brought meaning to my life.

For me, it's easy to neglect and forget that. To stay reminded of his presence in me, I have enrolled in Alpha a second and third time. The second and third times, I attended as a helper or group's host. This course is available twice a year at Christ the King. Other churches offer the same program. The Alpha videos are on YouTube, but it's best to watch with a group followed by a discussion with your mates. I'll try to remember to keep you posted when the next session starts again.

Resolutions, recovery, growth

SANDRA S.

Groundcover vendor No. 233

As I've progressed in life, my annual goal or New Year's resolution always seems to get harder and harder to accomplish. The first New Year's resolution I ever remember doing was three years ago, and that was that I could stay sober throughout the coming year (2016). That was hard at first, but I did it. On January 5, 2017, I celebrated my first year sober with a one-year coin from Alcoholics Anonymous.

My New Year's resolution to start 2017 was about as much as I could handle at the time — that I could maintain the sobriety I had achieved for that first year. I added that I could start working out and overall paying better attention to my physical health and eating habits. And so it happened. I celebrated the coming of 2018 with two years clean and sober, and the workout routine and better dieting had started happening.

I felt I had to challenge myself harder the following year. So my resolution then was that I would start helping others with the same struggles I had experienced before getting sober. That's supposed to be really helpful to someone new to recovery.

A person new to recovery is usually overwhelmed by all sorts of problems, like losing their driver's license from a DWI, losing their jobs or housing, losing custody of their kids and other legal issues. So, helping someone new to recovery is really good for them because they get to better focus on putting the drink or dope down. At the moment, it can seem insurmountable for them. If they don't have the smaller battles to fight or worry about, they can better focus on what recovery is or looks like. They feel cared for and next thing you know, you see them caring for themselves too, at least enough to stay sober for another 24 hours.

I feel I did pretty good throughout 2018 doing that. I helped many people newly in recovery, giving them rides to meetings, fellowshiping with them, meeting with them for coffee and talking with them. I even temporarily sponsored a few individuals for a few months. I showed them the recovery literature and the 12 Steps. I also volunteered at a few different places that focus on people trying to better their lives. And I even gave a few big donations to some charities, fundraisers and the homeless shelter.

I was homeless too at some point before getting sober, so I know what it is to be out there in the cold. So, it meant a lot to me to be able to give forward to others what at some point had been given to me by strangers. I have helped a lot and it worked both ways. It helped me get out of myself, and overall, out of the thoughts that linger in my mind to the point they drive me nuts sometimes. I was able to worry less in my everyday concerns by showing up for others and their worries.

However, to start 2019 on the right foot, I want to focus more on me now for my annual goal. I want to experience growth. I wasted so many years of my life. I wasted a third of my life, honestly. I thought I was getting or trying to get a career at some point, but all I did after all was become a loser. I lost everything. What didn't I lose? I could go on and on about what it was that I lost, but now I want to focus on the opposite. I want to gain. I want to gain experience. I want to gain faith. I want to gain friends and fellowship. I want to gain a caring and honest heart. Mostly, I want to gain confidence, and the ability to be good at something for the first time.

So, I have a few projects in mind where I want to put my

MEET YOUR VENDOR



Pony Bush, vendor No. 305

In one sentence, who are you?
I'm just me. Just an average guy. ... I'm a vendor of Groundcover News.

Where do you normally sell Groundcover?
Village Kitchen and First Baptist Church.

When and why did you start selling Groundcover?
Cause I wanted to make money.

What are your favorite things about selling Groundcover?
Making money and meeting people.

What's something our readers should know?
That we're putting this paper out for ... people that's struggling, that it's a positive thing. ... It's a paper for anybody.

What's the most interesting thing that's ever happened to you while selling Groundcover?
Meeting different personalities. I've met friends through selling Groundcover News.

How would you like to see Ann Arbor change for the better?
We don't have no black-owned businesses downtown. It would make it better to get some housing downtown for lower income people. We need affordable restaurants, too. ●

Vendor Cindy's art around town

Art around Ann Arbor from the homeless and low-income community has popped up in recent months around the city. Many are showing their talents. New shows are coming up and people are becoming more inspired to express their artistic talents.

As many of you know, I am one of the artists and my name is Cindy Gere, also known as Kung Fu Panda.

My work is in three locations. First is the Delonis Center, up on the walls in the lobby. That is strictly just a showing of my work ... it gives you an idea of what I love to do. In the main dining hall there are many other artworks of mine on display.

My second location is in the art gallery for low-income individuals at the Journey of Faith Church off Washtenaw Avenue near the Trader Joe's. The gallery is in the basement and is open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Saturday.

The last location, starting on Sept. 1, is in the Mercy House at 805 W. Huron St. This show on

MEET YOUR VENDOR



CINDY GERE
Groundcover vendor No. 279

the walls will be of smaller pieces.
For all who love the artist Keith Haring, my work is similar to his. I've been trying to be an artist — it's hard in this economy. For us artists we truly struggle. So, come and see all the art around Ann Arbor. All my art will be up through the end of this year. ●

Originally published in Groundcover News September 2019

MEET YOUR VENDOR



PAULA ANDERSON
Groundcover vendor No. 157

Working for Groundcover

Thank you, Groundcover. In September will make seven years since I have been working for you when I was homeless in 2013. Now it paid off in so many ways. You are helping me going back to school; my best dream ever. Hard work, everything, it paid off with my health and everything. I did it. I know my girls will never know I am going back to school, but maybe God will help put us back as a family. I will never give up my heart for that. ●

Originally published in Groundcover News September 2019

MEET YOUR VENDOR



Joe Woods, vendor No. 103

In one sentence, who are you?
I am the GOAT when it comes to this game.

Where do you normally sell Groundcover?
Cherry Republic

When and why did you start selling Groundcover?
July 2012. I was looking for work.

What's your favorite thing about selling Groundcover?
You never know what the day is going to bring.

What's something our readers should know?
I'm passionate about what I do.

What's the most interesting thing that's ever happened to you while selling Groundcover?
Every day is a new adventure when selling Groundcover.

How would you like to see Ann Arbor change for the better?
Make housing cheaper. ●

Originally published in Groundcover News Nov., 2019

Releasing resentment and embracing forgiveness

KEVIN SPANGLER
Groundcover vendor No. 307

Here's an excerpt on forgiveness from my upcoming book, "Rising out of Depression and Going up the Royal Road."

Forgiveness is how you become free. By forgiving people and sending them positive energy you're actually helping yourself and helping them become better people, even if they have done you wrong. Even in the worst way you can possibly think — even for something we think we could never forgive, like physical abuse, mental abuse, sexual abuse. Even if the person you resent is no longer living.

Once you have mastered forgiving, you want to practice forgiving in an instant. When you want everyone around you to become better, it's important for you to break that negative resentment, because if you hold onto resentment, you're not hurting them; you're just hurting yourself.

We hold onto resentment like a piece of burning coal thinking it's affecting the person we're feeling searing resentment toward. Holding onto this burning coal of resentment keeps us in a negative mind state. When we hold onto negativity, we attract more negativity. Whatever we focus on is what we get. I kept resenting my father and kept going in and out of jail, and I kept drinking all the time. I was living in a negative world. We use the resentment to create a story that keeps us in the negative reality we are creating, like, if I would have had a better childhood, I wouldn't be going to jail.

As long as we hold resentments toward others, and do not take responsibility for our actions and externalize our current life state of negativity onto others, we will never be free. We think we are free, but in the very bottom of

our mind, beneath all our conscious daily functioning, we are blaming someone else for the way things are when life does not satisfy us.

This is much easier than taking full responsibility for our own choices when they are creating a reality for us that we do not like. When we look at all the individuals we hold resentment toward and stop the complain-blame game, we are left with no one but ourselves, our thinking, and the reality we create based on our choices. Also, if we are still having an emotional reaction to someone that we feel wronged us, we are not free. If I was still holding onto resentment about my father, I would be thinking over and over about how bad my upbringing was, and that's why my life is so terrible. ... I would actually be continually re-creating the negative reality I am complaining about and blaming my father for.

At any moment someone could mention the person we feel so much resentment toward, or they could walk in the room, or we think about them out of nowhere, and we are so impacted by our negative feelings toward them that we give away our freedom in that moment to the power of the negativity. We are bound in that moment to our negativity, the power we are giving them, and the potential for that moment to be as beautiful as possible is lost because a shadow of negativity casts over it — and over time, life becomes less beautiful. Like I said, forgiveness is how you become free. Being aware of our resentments and how they are creating a negative reality is the key to forgiveness.

Forgiveness is a continual daily practice. I personally have forgiven before and then gone back to my resentment. Over time and with practice, though, forgiveness will prevail. ●

Originally published in Groundcover News October 2019

MEET YOUR VENDOR



LA SHAWN COURTWRIGHT
Groundcover vendor No. 56

From writer to published author: announcing the release of my book

Hello everyone. I'm proud to announce the release of my first book, titled, "The Fold—A Collection of Poetry by La Shawn Courtwright." It is a dream come true for me. It is currently available online through Barnes and Noble and Amazon. In approximately four to six weeks it will also be available on iTunes and Google Play. I hope that many will purchase and enjoy my

work. I would like to mention that any bookstores that choose to offer my book for sale may purchase them at a discount of 55%, and they are returnable to Page Publishing Company. This is truly an honor to graduate from a published writer to author. I have a novella and another series of poetry that will be released in the latter part of 2020 or early 2021.

I look forward to sharing many more works of mine with you all. I aspire to be amongst the most extraordinary screenwriters in the near-future. I hope that you will enjoy reading these writings as much as I did creating them. ●

Originally published in Groundcover News December 2019



PAULINE BURNAT
Groundcover vendor No. 351

First pro haircut in 30 years

For the first time in my 70-year life I got a really good hair cut that I love, and it was free, thanks to the kindhearted hair dressers Joe Jenkins and Ali McKeon. Both sacrificed their valuable time and talents to help 18 homeless people at the Daytime Warming Center get their hair cut. This was so immensely kind of Joe and Ali.

My hair was all hacked up because I cut it myself. Joe trimmed it and layered it, exactly as I asked him to do. I had not had a hair dresser cut my hair in about 30 years because they always cut it too short and I couldn't afford it. Joe did such a good

job on my hair that I got lots of compliments. Thank you, Joe and Ali, you are terrific.

I am so grateful for what Joe and Ali did for us homeless people that I want to repay them with this little article to honor them and to hopefully bring some new clients to two worthy special people. So, if you would also like a good haircut and help two very nice, kind-hearted people, find Joe and Ali at Fantastic Sams at 1862 Whittaker Road in Ypsilanti. ●

Originally published in Groundcover News May 2019

Excerpt from my upcoming book



KEVIN SPANGLER
Groundcover vendor No. 307

I set a goal to write 111 books and two days later a publisher from Loving Healing Press called me out of the blue and said he wanted to publish my life story and philosophy. It is set up to be a self-help book for finding out where you are going wrong and to reprogram your brain for a better reality.

Editor's Note: Below are excerpts from the first chapter of the book, *"Rising out of Depression and Going up the Royal Road,"* which Kevin is co-creating with his girlfriend, Ariel.

Spaghetti Junction

Life is unmanageable, you are missing your turns, it makes sense to you at the time, you rationalize irrational things, you never move forward, you keep going in circles, you are making wrong turns, you get frustrated, you keep making mistakes, you don't know why you're making mistakes because you are still working from old programs or beliefs in your brain, you can't see clearly, you can't see ahead, your frustration clouds the present and makes life negative, you abandon any hope or dreams for the future that you have developed because of negativity.

When I was 16, I got a root canal. I never did drugs or smoked cigarettes and I always thought that all those things were disgusting, and I never wanted to do them. But I went to the dentist office and when I was there, they gave me laughing gas – nitrous oxide. It was the most amazing experience and I felt everything turn purple and everything was vibrating and the lights were shaking. This is where I made my first

wrong turn in the Spaghetti Junction. That led to me to start experimenting with whippets, which are metal gas cartridges that I would use to release nitrous oxide into a big balloon and then inhale from the balloon. I started spending all my money on nitrous oxide. I was paying people to take me into Ann Arbor, the only place close-by that I could get the whippet chargers.

Growing up, I was on medication for ADD. I used to play all sports in school. Something happened where my dad would not let me play sports anymore, and then he told me that he was not going to let me be in marching band anymore, either. That was the last thing he could take away from me, so we got into an argument when he was taking me home from work and then he started beating me. I cannot remember what happened after that, but I fell out of the car. It was on a Sunday, three days before Thanksgiving, and I did not go to school that week.

I started eating everything I possibly could. I started adding extra mayonnaise to every sandwich, I added butter to everything. I would indent the top of my burger and fill the indent with butter. I wanted to kill myself by eating. I was completely off the road and into the gravel.

[In the military], I started going to school for advanced electronic computers and was retaining nothing because my brain was so fried. The only way I could pass the test was to take the test, memorize the answers and retake it again. I would always fail, so I started to have to take extra classes because I was stupid. I went through the classes and was still winning best-dressed with the shiniest shoes. Primed and pampered, I finally triple-failed the test so I could get out of the school and be a chef in the military, which was my original plan.

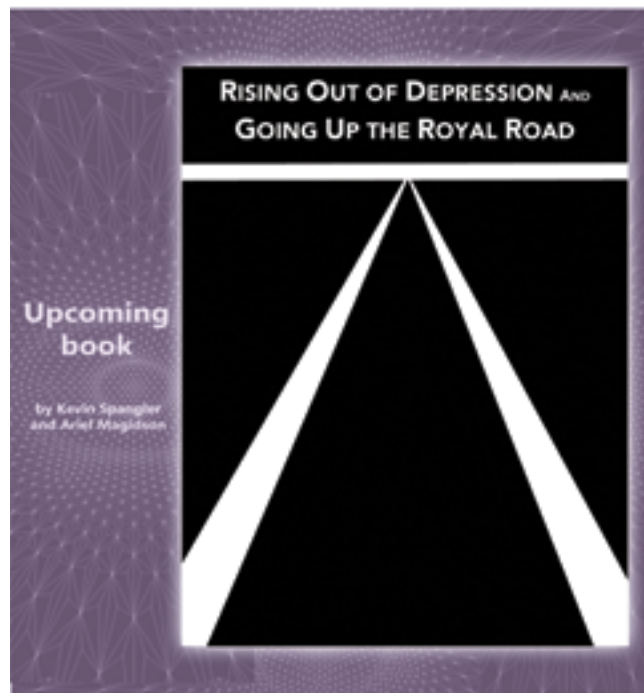
After I triple-failed, I had nothing to do in the military because I was in limbo between work. Sometimes when we are traveling the Spaghetti Junction we will actually try to make wrong turns; we rationalize irrational things because it makes sense at the time. Our lives can become so tangled we do not even know how to remove ourselves from the labyrinth our life has become because of our bad choices or wrong turns.

So I became friends with all the derelicts in the military. I started to do and sell ecstasy heavily. I took a \$6,000 loan out of Navy Credit Federal Union and I told everyone else to get out a loan. I was having ecstasy hotel parties off-base and selling to

absolutely anything that is going on in my life.

He isn't just a boss that sits around and barks orders. He's our friend and a huge inspiration to us all here. Finally, I feel like I can actually be totally clean and sober. I worked for Kevin two years ago, and when I finally decided to come back and work this summer, I was at a really low point in my life. I had gone through a really hard break-up and was drinking and smoking cigarettes every single day.

I called Kevin after I had been arrested by the cops and was sent to the hospital to be put on suicide watch. He immediately responded, never once judged me for the situation I had gotten myself into, and offered to have me come to the shop where we



the people coming to the party. I ended up getting raided. I had 30 pills of ecstasy in my underwear pocket, and I took it out to sell to the undercover narc who was my friend.

I went to prison to be court-marshalled and that's when I started praying. My lawyer kept telling me I needed to rat on people in the case. I told him I wasn't going to. So, I chanted and prayed that I didn't deserve five years in prison, and that I only deserved a year in prison, so I prayed for a one-year sentence. They gave me a one-year sentence. I ended up getting to be a chef after all – in prison.

Experiential exercise: life reflection

[Excerpt from *"Action Book for Co-Creating the Experience of the Road Trip,"* a companion journal to the book]

1. What is one of the hardest things you have ever been through on your "Spaghetti Junction"?
2. What type of decisions have you made in your life that seemed reasonable at the time, but later seemed ridiculous?
3. How has negativity or fear ruled your behavior in the past?

(Wow, that was a rough ride. Let's reset with 33 deep breaths.) ●

Originally published in *Groundcover News* February 2019

would chant and set some new goals for myself to work towards.

I'm in the best shape I've been in for years and I'm developing a spiritual life. I chant several times a week at the shop and I can see myself rising into higher vibrations, as I work towards my goal to become a yoga instructor. I owe it all to my Boober family and the wonderful town of Ann Arbor. I would be lost without my family here at Boober and am beyond thankful for the support of the whole Ann Arbor community. ●

Originally published in *Groundcover News* October 2018

Payday loans: Do laws protect consumers?

WILL SHAKESPEARE

Groundcover vendor No. 258

MARSHALL AVERILL

United Way Financial Empowerment Coordinator

Many consumers who need cash quickly turn to payday loans – short-term, high-interest loans that are generally due on the consumer's next payday after the loan is taken out.

– U.S. Federal Trade Commission

Payday loans made headlines this summer with news that the acting Consumer Financial Protection Bureau chief was considering a rules change such that the agency would no longer seek and fine lenders who lent money to military personnel at interest rates that exceeded 36 percent per year. Low-ranking soldiers are among the many working poor tempted by loan sharks when emergencies occur and they need money in a hurry. The Military Lending Caps protect soldiers from debt traps so severe that they might be tempted to take bribes to escape.

High-interest, short-term loans are called payday loans because they are supposed to be a bridge to the next paycheck for unanticipated cash expenses. But since borrowers' finances are rarely assessed on their ability to repay the loans, the loan recipient often resorts to taking out one loan after another to pay each previous loan, racking up interest payments of over 100 percent.

To help Michigan borrowers know what they are getting into, the Michigan Attorney General's office helped draft Michigan Deferred Presentment Act of 2017. The law stipulates that customers sign written agreements that must include an itemization of the fees to be paid and the equivalent annual percentage rate. The agreement must also clearly describe the payment obligations and the process a customer may take to file a complaint against the payday lender.

Though this law governs payday loans in Washtenaw County, it is not legally binding. Consumer alerts for predatory lending are not considered legal advice because there is no state-mandated legal authority or mechanism for enforcement.

The Michigan State Legislature then considered a series of bills (SB 430, SB 431 and SB 432) that increased the maximum dollar amounts and loan periods for "small loans." Thousands of Michigan residents demonstrated

against these bills that were designed to help payday lenders increase the amount and duration of loans they offer to \$2,500 for up to two years.

Jessica AcMoody, a Senior Policy Specialist at the non-profit Community Economic Development Association of Michigan (CEDAM) joined 87 community organizations to protest in Lansing. Commenting on the bill's potential impact, AcMoody said, "So, if someone takes out a \$1,500 loan for 12 months, the fees on the loan would be \$1,709. The total that the consumer would pay back if the Senate bill goes into effect would be \$3,209."

AcMoody also estimated that on a two-year \$2,500 loan, payday lenders would collect more than \$8,300. The full force for payday lending in low-income communities is very high. The CEDAM study shows that 91 percent of people who borrow from payday lenders in Michigan re-borrow within 60 days.

The protesters urged the state government to crack down on predatory lenders, and help low-income communities get more access to financial education and banking options such as local credit unions.

CEDAM and others, including the United Way of Washtenaw County, are advocating for a state law that caps payday loan interest rates at 36 percent annually, giving all our people the same protections as the military.

In Washtenaw County, there are quite a few payday loan businesses – more in Ypsilanti than in Ann Arbor. Poorer communities seem to be a target for payday loan businesses.

Borrowers from Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti have divergent viewpoints about their payday loan experiences. For some, they do fulfill a need. Others feel abused. A common complaint relates to payday loan businesses converting gift cards into cash for their customers. Here's one anonymous review found recently online:

They are SCAMMERS! Beware of gift card sellers. They seem legit at first, but months down the road, they will claim they never received your electronic gift cards. They are harassing me and making false disputes. Wonder why they don't pay via PayPal anymore? Because of false claims! It's okay though! SHUT IT DOWN! Keep up the harassment, Quick Cash. You are only hurting yourself. Also, they pay \$10 per positive review you give them. Don't believe me? I've got emails as a proof.

The federal government has attempted to crack down on payday lenders and the debt trap they set for their customers. The Atlantic of May 2016 described the payday lending



industry as a fringe financial service industry that needed drastic reforms. The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) was created in order to protect consumers.

CFPB established a rule in 2016 to govern the payday lending industry and help keep them more honest. To stop payday debt traps, lenders now are required to "determine upfront whether consumers have the ability to repay their loans." According to the CFPB, "Faced with unaffordable payments, cash-strapped consumers must choose between defaulting, re-borrowing, or skipping other financial obligations like rent or basic living expenses such as food or obtaining medical care."

CFPB researchers concluded that about 12 million lower-income households who live paycheck-to-paycheck received loans from storefront lenders. There are more payday loan offices than McDonald's in America.

The payday loan consumer information section of CFPB shows that 18 states and Washington, D.C., prohibit extremely high-cost payday lending; three states permit lower payday lending; and 32 states (including Michigan) authorize high-cost payday lending.

On February 13, 2018, the Stopping Abuse and Fraud in Electronics (SAFE) Lending Act was introduced in Congress to crack down on the worst abusers.

Senate co-sponsor Jeff Markley stated, "Predatory payday loans trap working families in a vortex of debt. Too many people in Oregon and across the country have been victims of predatory lending, trapped in a cycle of debt to pay emergency expenses or their rent."

Congressman Elijah Cummings lamented, "Payday lenders routinely prey on hard-working Americans struggling to make ends meet by charging excessive interest rates that

trap them in an endless cycle of debt." He continued, "The SAFE Lending Act of 2018 will empower consumers, respect States' rights, help prevent shadow lending, and give States and Federal Authorities control over rogue internet-based lenders."

The Wall Street Journal of March 19, 2018 observed that states like Florida have passed legislation to relax the tough CFPB rules for payday lenders. Since January 2017, more permissive states like Michigan have been trying to give the payday lending industry a boost.

Meanwhile, non-profits are experimenting with alternatives for cash-strapped, asset-poor borrowers. Employee Resource Networks (ERNs) are formed by companies to provide on-site financial coaching during work hours and often, small loans. These loans, which are sometimes as much as \$1,000, are paid back through payroll deductions over the following 12 months. Payment history is recorded with credit bureaus so these also help with building a better credit score. Six to 12 employers generally band together to form one ERN and share the costs of the financial coach. The coach helps employees navigate financial issues interfering with them getting to their job sites on time and focused on work.

Along with more stringent protections, many in our community would like to see a financial institution designed to help the more vulnerable communities. United Way is wrapping up a one-year pilot of a small-dollar loan program. They found that their turnaround time was too long to address acute emergencies and are now seeking a closer connection to a bank to address that problem. ●

Originally published in *Groundcover News* October 2018

Working for Boober Tours changed my life

LYNDSEY COLLIER

Groundcover contributor

My "boss," Kevin Spangler, is the first boss I've ever had that I feel like I could come to and talk to about

The deep roots of #MeToo – A history of the Suffragettes

WILL SHAKESPEARE
Groundcover vendor No. 258

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the World. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”
– Margaret Mead

Historians describe the Women’s Suffrage Movement as the most significant achievement by women during the Progressive Era, that period between the 1890s and 1920s. While abolitionists, activists and other supporters played significant roles, the Seneca Falls (New York) Convention of 1848 was viewed as “the meeting that launched the suffrage movement.”

As it happened, Lucretia Mott invited Elizabeth Cady Stanton to have tea with four friends. The five women in upstate New York had an intense conversation about women’s issues and agreed to convene the first Woman’s Rights Convention at Seneca Falls. Over 200 women were in attendance. Forty men, including abolitionist Fredrick Douglass, participated in the Convention.

Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony are generally credited as the leaders of the suffrage movement for some 21 years. They co-wrote several volumes of the book, “History of Woman Suffrage,” a monumental history of the women’s suffrage movement published in six volumes between 1881-1922.

Anthony and Stanton complemented each other. Anthony excelled at organizing and Stanton had an aptitude for intellectual matters and writing. Stanton wrote speeches that Anthony delivered. Because of Anthony’s community mobilization and speaking skills, she became the iconic personality of the movement for women’s legal, social and political rights. Historians give equal recognition to Stanton.

But even well-known women reformers in the suffrage movement could not get politicians to listen to them because they had not secured the right to vote. For several decades, they lobbied Congress to introduce a constitutional amendment. Anthony was rebuked when she tried to speak at the New York State Temperance Convention. The men told her that “ladies have been invited to listen and learn, and not to speak.”

After Seneca Falls, suffragist leaders such as Lucy Stone and Paulina Wright Davis led a series of Women’s Rights Conventions in Worcester, Mass., in the 1850s and 1860s. Most suffrage leaders, black and white, were aligned with the abolitionist movement of the 19th century.

See **SUFFRAGE** page 13 ➡

By 1869, Anthony and Stanton led the National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA), while the American Woman Suffragist Association (AWSA) was led by Lucy Stone, Elizabeth Blackwell and Julia Ward Howe. AWSA supported the 15th Amendment as was written. NWSA opposed the 15th Amendment of 1870, ending voting discrimination based on race, and the 14th amendment of 1868, providing equal protection under the law. The reason for NWSA’s opposition was that Anthony, Stanton and some suffragists preferred “universal suffrage” – the right to vote of all adult citizens.

The ideological difference was intense. Abolitionist Fredrick Douglass, who called himself a “women’s rights man” and was the only black man at the Seneca Fall Convention, was angry because “Anthony and Stanton insisted on property ownership and a literacy requirement for black males who would get the right to vote ahead of females.”

Eventually, AWSA and NWSA merged in 1890 as NAWSA – the National American Woman Suffrage Association – with Anthony as the leader.

Black Women Pioneers

Many historians and feminist writers have said that people who told the story of the suffrage movement overlooked the contributions of African-American women pioneers who helped to secure women’s right to vote. Sojourner Truth, Ida B. Wells-Barnett, Mary Church Terrell, Francis Ellen Watkins Harper, Harriett Tubman, Mary M. Bethune, Ella Baker and several notable black suffragists worked as hard as Anthony and Stanton to achieve the right to vote. They fought alongside the lower-class women. They did not see the suffrage movement as a movement for only middle-class whites.

Born into slavery and deprived of a formal education, Sojourner Truth nevertheless became a particularly influential figure in the movement. Her most famous speech, “Ain’t I a Woman?” (1851), was delivered extemporaneously and became widely known during the Civil War.

Anna Julia Cooper, who had a master’s degree in mathematics, also gave a moving speech that resonates with many of today’s black women scholars. The title was, “Only Black Women Can Say When and Where I Enter.” Cooper also gave an impressive speech at the 1893 Chicago World’s Fair in support of black women suffragists. In it



Susan B. Anthony, Sojourner Truth, Alice Paul, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Ida B. Wells and Lucy Stone (left to right, top to bottom) were prominent suffragist leaders.

Milestones: Women’s Rights Movement

First Wave

1848: The Seneca Falls Convention of 1848 was viewed as “the meeting that launched the suffrage movement.”

Second Wave

1963: The publication of “The Feminine Mystique,” by Betty Freidan, ushered in women’s rights, equal rights and gender consciousness of the 1960s and 1970s.

Third Wave

Early 1990s: Professor Anita Hill’s sexual misconduct accusations of Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas sparked widely publicized hearings by the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee.

Fourth Wave

2012: A resurgence of interest in feminist thinking, especially the issues of technology, justice for women, and opposition to sexual harassment and violence towards women, leading to the present #MeToo movement.

Irish for a day



Celtic-American folk band, Roane, performed for “Women’s Christmas” on Jan. 6 at St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church in Ann Arbor.

ELIZABETH “LIT” KURTZ
Groundcover vendor No. 159

Anywhere in history on any part of the globe where women get a day off deserves notice. I found that day quite unexpectedly last month while selling my Groundcovers at St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church.

I was told there was a party taking place in the Parish Activity Center and was invited to be seated alongside other women at one of the various tables, each adorned with a unique centerpiece whose history and purpose I would find out later.

The inspiration behind the gathering was the Rev. James Conlon, who represented one of only a smattering of men. He revealed that this day, which is celebrated the Sunday after Christmas, originated in his birthplace of Ireland. There it is called “Nollaig na mBan,” Little Christmas or Women’s Christmas, and occurs January 6 each year. It is a day set aside for women to be free from their duties. On that day, the men change diapers, do laundry and cooking and generally fulfill the traditional roles of their wives.

Although like most present that day I am not Irish, we all bonded over the shared gratification of women having a day to relax from their routine, even if it is “just one day” as one woman in the crowd stated aloud to the humorous understanding of all the women in attendance.

We were treated to nice fare, including wine and crudité. I reveled in the songs played by a mostly female Irish band consisting of a mother, daughter, son-in-law and the former college friend of the daughter. There was a fiddler who lent just the right touch of Gaelic tradition.

This Irish celebration would not have been complete without hearing “Old Danny Boy,” which the group related they had first performed in Ireland. After listening to their distinctive and moving rendition, it was clear to me why the Irish performance we were treated to was originally given glowing praise.

Before long, I was caught up as a participant in the event. By then I had learned that the circular cakes at the center of each table all contained a replica of the little baby Jesus. Like the

other women at my table, I held my breath, hoping my slice of cake would be the one containing the precious babe.

Before they got to my section, someone in my group announced that they had found it in their slice. Similar exclamations of delight dotted the room. Although I didn’t get the prize, there was no doubt that I had won also, just being included in such a special day.

I shared with the women at my table my homeless struggle and the unique perspective it has given me on the world around me. The women eagerly agreed as I related the importance of the voice of the homeless women not be drowned out in the discourse of the women’s movement.

By the sheer chance of my selling Groundcover News, this first Sunday of the year filled me with hope that women from all backgrounds will bond to create a better future for our daughters. I enjoyed the fellowship of women who, like me, need time – albeit it “just one day” – to feel more empowered to face our world. ●

Originally published in Groundcover News February 2019

Being here

CHRISTOPHER ELLIS
Groundcover contributor

She bends, a flower
gives, and
the snow won’t seem
kind in the morning
fall...

As her chair moves, she pushes
on
while leaves are green.

➡ **SUFFRAGE** from page 12

she said, “I speak for the colored women of the South because it is there that the millions of blacks in this country have watered the soil with blood and tears, and it is there too that the colored woman of America has made her characteristic history, and her destiny is evolving.”

African American women had to contend with the sexism of being denied the right to vote, but also the racism of some white suffragists. They petitioned, they lobbied, they gave speeches, they organized, they mobilized and they marched in parades. As journalist Michelle Barnard said in The Washington Post of March 3, 2013, “Despite the tremendous risk, African American women marched for suffrage, too.” Black female reformers and suffragists soldiered on.

Frances Ellen Harper said, “No race can afford to neglect the enlightenment of its mothers.” Exclusionary practices were obvious and ubiquitous. Black women worked very hard to organize and have their own groups.

In 1896, the National Federation of Afro-American Women (NFAW) merged with the National League of Colored Women (NLCW) to form the National Association of Colored Women (NACW) with suffragist leader Mary Church Terrell as the first president. NACW maintained an organization called the “Equal Suffrage League.” That was the rapid deployment vehicle for club mobilization and supporting the right to vote.

War and progress

When Alice Paul of NAWSA organized the famous march of 1913 to demonstrate against President-Elect Woodrow Wilson in Washington, D.C., Mary Church Terrell, Ida B. Wells and several Delta Sigma Theta sorority members from Howard University joined the march with enthusiasm and a sense of mission. NACW maintained a separate suffrage office.

World War I had a major impact on the suffrage movement. A significant number of states in the West, Midwest and Northeast started to enact women’s suffrage laws. Their efforts provided the political opportunity for a broader change.

In 1916, the suffragists used their formidable political power to campaign for the 19th amendment in various states. In that year, President Wilson sent a letter to Congress in support of the women’s right to vote. Congresswoman Janet Rankin of Montana introduced the bill for women’s suffrage. It passed in both Houses of Congress and was ratified in August of 1920 with the following statement: “The rights of the Citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex.”

As we strive forward in this new century, women’s rights should not be taken for granted. Women of new generations should be grateful, knowing that women in the past secured victories that made lives and circumstances much better for American women of all generations. Countless others since – notably, the recently emerged #MeToo movement – have remained vigilant to protect and extend that progress.

Yet, glass ceilings still exist and pay equity has not been achieved. Domestic violence against women has not been stopped, and sexual harassment is still a major issue in our national dialogue. However, there are hopes and dreams. The suffragists were right about the power of the ballot. The 19th Amendment and women’s rising political power have changed the world, and will continue to make a difference, so long as they are safeguarded and put to use. ●

Originally published in Groundcover News July 2018

GROUNDCOVER NEWS ADVERTISING RATES

Size	Black and White	Color	Approx. Size (W x H)
Business card	\$49.95	\$65.95	2.5 x 1.5
1/8	\$89.95	\$129.95	5 x 3 or 2.5 x 6.5
1/6	\$129.95	\$165.95	5 x 4
1/4	\$159.95	\$215.95	5 x 6.25
1/2	\$299.95	\$399.95	10.25 x 6.5 or 5 x 13
Full Page	\$495.95	\$669.95	10.25 x 13

PACKAGE PRICING

Three Months/Three Issues: 15% off

Six Months/Six Issues: 25% off

Full Year/Twelve Issues: 35% off

Additional 20% off ads with coupons

➡ **EQUITY** from page 3

County Juvenile Court Administrator, stated, “Community Partners and the community at-large should know that this equity policy ordinance is intended to be the beginning, not the end, of a bigger conversation about inequities in our community. They should also know that their voices are vital.”

Numerous government agencies participate in the work to achieve equity. “We will strive to work together toward common goals that benefit all of our residents,” said County Commissioner Felicia Brabec, who played a large role in getting the Equity Ordinance passed. “Breaking down silos, sharing data, programs and resources will help our community reach our collective goals sooner than if we do it one by one,” said Brabec.

The Office of Community and Economic Development has played a large role in gathering and sharing the data that will be used as a baseline and guide implementation of equity initiatives. Like the other women working on these initiatives, OCED Director Teresa Gillotti uses her personal experiences to heighten her sensitivity to discrimination. “I find that I’m constantly looking at any given room I’m in – a meeting, a forum, a committee, to see who is represented. How many women are in the room and able to impact decision-making – how many people of color? It’s important to be aware of who is engaged

and able to be in a position of providing input and making decisions. It’s also important that we change policy and practice to make sure those spaces are as diverse and inclusive as possible,” said Gillotti.

The Health Department is another key player in advancing the new policy. “Washtenaw County Health Department exists to protect health and to ensure all in our community have the opportunity to live a healthy life. This initiative is focused on racial equity. But, [community health and racial equity] do intersect,” said Rabinowitz.

Rabinowitz continued, “I’ve watched women have fewer opportunities, get paid less. While this is not the same as experiencing racism, it does help you see it and begin to understand the pervasive impacts. Seeing and acknowledging that racism takes a toll on community members’ health has been critical to the initiative and to the work of the Health Department. Then, we can begin to change how we make decisions, who makes them, what they consider, and, importantly, how those decisions impact community members.”

The County is at the beginning of a long process for achieving equity. The women guiding the process shared thoughts about the journey and end-point.

“Some of our next steps will be to lay out a short-term and long-term vision for where we’re going with the racial equity program. As part of that, we are hoping to set benchmarks to achieve the goal. It is

too soon to report out, but we’re hoping that tools like the Washtenaw Opportunity Index will help us use data to set the baseline, so we can track our progress over time. It is important to know that it took a long time to get here, and it will take a long-term commitment to truly move the needle toward racial equity,” said Gillotti.

“The community outcomes will be decided on both an internal county level, and through conversations. Again, doing this work means all of us working towards a common goal. In order to do that, there needs to be some collective decision-making as part of that process. We, as a community, need to be invested in this,” said Brabec.

“We want to see existing health inequities start to disappear. Inequities are the systematic, avoidable and unfair differences in health that we see between racial groups. These are longstanding differences, and it will take time to see change,” commented Rabinowitz.

“Looking at the big picture, we will know that this equity policy program is successful when race and where one lives in Washtenaw County are no longer predictors of one’s overall mental or physical health, life expectancy, employment, income or education,” said Edwards-Brown. ●

Originally published in Groundcover News January 2019

➡ **RECOVERY** from page 7

To summarize, I’ll tell you that Alpha has changed the way I think of God and religion. I grew up with the belief that religion was boring, and that it left me feeling inadequate or perhaps not good enough compared to “good” Christians. Who would want religion in their lives if it only brings them negative feelings about themselves? No one. And I didn’t either.

But in Alpha I never felt judged. And to start where each of us is, is just fine. No one is better than anyone else. The strongest believers aren’t better than the skeptics. If anything, it’s about being open-minded to decide for yourself without pressure if you want to become a believer and accept Jesus Christ into your life. And I think I did and that hasn’t meant I have to be perfect. I fall short every day and wish every time I could have handled certain situations better, but for me it’s just about growing in my faith and trying to better, myself. Happy April! ●

Originally published in Groundcover News April 2019

Groundcover Vendor Code

While Groundcover News vendors are contracted self-employees, we still have expectations of how vendors should conduct themselves while selling and representing the paper. Every vendor reads and signs this code of conduct before receiving a badge and papers. If you discover a vendor violating any tenets of the code, please contact us at contact@groundcovernews.com or 734-263-2098 and provide as many details as possible. Our paper and our vendors should benefit our county. All vendors must agree to the following:

- Groundcover News will be distributed for a voluntary donation of \$2,

or the face value of the paper.

- I agree not to ask for more than face value or solicit donations by any other means.
- I will only sell current issues of Groundcover News.
- I agree not to sell additional goods or products when selling the paper or to panhandle, including panhandling with only one paper.
- I will wear and display my badge when selling papers.
- I will only purchase the paper from Groundcover News Staff and will not sell to or buy papers from other Groundcover News vendors, especially vendors who have been suspended or terminated.
- I agree to treat all customers, staff and other vendors respectfully. I

- will not “hard sell,” threaten, harass or pressure customers, staff, or other vendors verbally or physically.
- I will not sell Groundcover News under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
- I understand that I am not a legal employee of Groundcover News but a contracted worker responsible for my own well-being and income.
- I understand that my badge is property of Groundcover News and will not deface it. I will present my badge when purchasing the papers.
- I agree to stay off private property when selling Groundcover News.
- I understand to refrain from

selling on public buses, federal property or stores unless there is permission from the owner.

- I agree to stay at least one block away from another vendor. I will also abide by the Vendor corner policy.



➡ **RESOLUTIONS** from page 7

focus and attention in this coming year. But I can’t share those details now because “it’ll make them unachievable,” or so my mind tells me. Maybe in my next article I’ll write about one of them, at least. And maybe right now I’ll just say what that is about. It is about my wanting to get more involved with Groundcover News, mostly publishing many articles.

Anyways, I wish all the Groundcover readers a happy New Year. Thanks for your support, and I hope you, too, achieved your 2018 annual goals and that you have set a realistic 2019 goal to accomplish. ●

Originally published in Groundcover News January 2019

Aretha Franklin – a testament to the black Baptist church

ELIZABETH “LIT” KURTZ

Groundcover vendor No. 159

Like Aretha Franklin, I grew up in the black Baptist church. As a matter of fact, I lived next door to the parsonage where I saw families come and go over the years. What impacted me the most was seeing the sons and daughters seemingly embody the gifts of their fathers.

So it was with Aretha, who at four played the piano at her father’s church. Her natural music talent, undoubtedly a gift from above, was further strengthened by growing up in the environment of the church.

Even for those of us who weren’t preacher’s kids, the black Baptist church fostered a wealth of experiences. From Whitney Houston to Aretha, the range of musical experiences it inspired led to many big-time musical successes.

So in 1998, when media accounts were puzzled by Aretha Franklin’s standing in for opera tenor Luciano Pavarotti during a Grammy performance of Puccini’s “Nessun Dorma,” I was unfazed, knowing that women tenors are part of the black Baptist tradition where music ranges from spirituals to the classics.

In my own church I recall women such as Hilda Miller and Mildred Henderson, who seamlessly held down the tenor section of the church’s choir. Not only did they sing countless gospel melodies, but also classical cornerstones such as Handel’s

“Messiah.”

This was the rich heritage that nourished the spirit of Aretha Franklin. As is the tradition of the black Baptist church, duties range from teaching a Sunday School class to taking the place of an absent singer.

So, when the famous tenor Pavarotti fell ill, Aretha undoubtedly knew her role in making the performance complete. She quickly stepped in with her well-trained female Baptist tenor voice to help make that night a success.

Aretha’s foray into secular music caused some to take pause and wonder whether she left the church. Yet it was her father, Reverend C.L. Franklin – the famous Baptist minister and civil rights activist – who in a recorded live performance of his daughter singing “Precious Lord,” exclaimed, “Aretha never left the Church!”

She will be remembered for many things, but her commitment to the arts and her passion to give back a wholesome musical experience to the church and beyond exemplifies Aretha Franklin, the “Queen of Soul.”

What began at New Bethel Baptist Church on the formerly named Linwood Street in Detroit under Reverend Franklin brought us the incomparable Aretha Franklin, whose soulful voice not only impacted her own home church but the entire world. ●



The Queen of Soul belted out music from the church and opera as well as R&B and soul.

Originally published in Groundcover News September 2018

Anthony Bourdain understood “the other”

ELIZABETH “LIT” KURTZ

Losing my conventional housing following one of Detroit’s massive teacher layoffs drastically changed the way that I viewed my world. In one fell swoop I slipped from middle class, teaching school and living in a comfortable apartment, to sleeping in my car and hunting down food and showers as one might search fast food restaurants for their favorite fare.

It was at that point that I began to brush up on my political awareness in a desperate search for answers that might change the circumstances which left me without conventional housing. Having joined a segment of what many call the Forgotten America, I did not have the luxury of being swayed by the media or public opinion or relying on others for choices.

The times spent barely surviving had taken their toll, and the barriers of color and the fragmented call for women’s rights began to recede and were supplanted by a strong desire to be extricated from my circumstances. I decided to dig beneath what seemed like the surface-only rhetoric of liberals and the perceived stingy pockets of Republicans to seek answers unique to my plight. Surprisingly, my search for answers led me away from the Democratic party and into President Trump’s camp.

Though Anthony Bourdain fiercely denounced Trump, he had developed an intimacy with marginalized America which gave him a rare and treasured understanding of our need for change. As he traversed the country, he immersed himself into the depths of the lives of those on the periphery and developed a special bond with the many Americans



Bourdain in 2014 at the 73rd annual Peabody Awards.

who felt suppressed and left behind by past politics.

So while my candidate of choice seemed bizarre and counter-intuitive for a woman – a woman of African-American descent experiencing homelessness – Anthony Bourdain illuminated what others could not conceive. He understood the sense of urgency that had taken over many lives and the need for a hint of legislation which would save me and others like me from our plights.

He was unmistakable in his fight for Middle America, who he felt was misunderstood by his media counterparts, and unabashedly gave representation to that voice. He was appalled by the disdain for the

working middle class too often expressed by his liberal elitist peers.

In one of his most revealing articles, he was quoted as saying, “The utter contempt with which privileged Eastern liberals such as myself discuss red-state, gun-country, working-class America as ridiculous and morons and rubes is largely responsible for the upswell of rage and contempt and desire to pull down the temple that we’re seeing now.”

When I resided in the middle class, Anthony Bourdain’s “Parts Unknown” filled my television screen as he revealed the innards of society while relishing dishes that others would not dare touch.

When I became homeless, he continued to reveal that Americans like myself who have fallen onto the margins are more complex than the broad stroke with which society and the media paint us. He grasped that our political choices are born out of deep hurts and a genuine desire to be included in the American dream.

His career was fueled by a passionate attempt to blend the many flavors of the world to produce a melting pot where all could dine in peace and mutual respect. He left the world a better place because we were allowed to partake of his offerings.

His rare voice of understanding will be missed by me and by all who savor freedom of choice without ridicule.

To hear more of my commentary on this topic, visit YouTube and type “Anthony Bourdain and Starbucks” in the search bar. ●

Originally published in Groundcover News July 2018

Remembering my sister, Crystal Marie Ludwig



TABITHA L.
Groundcover vendor No. 360

I don't really know how to start and this is hard for me to write. So first let me say R.I.P. sissy – you will forever be missed but never forgotten, I promise you that.

Crystal lived a very hard life. From the day she was born she was fighting for her life because our mom had her over three months early. She was so little she had to wear baby doll clothes. Then at the age of two-and-a-half she became a big sister to me.

When she was just five years old she was already raising me due to our parents' drug and alcohol addictions. One day she almost burnt down the house (at the age of five) because she was trying to cook for me. I was crying because I was hungry and she couldn't get nobody up to feed me, so she decided to do it herself.

It was me and my sister against the world from that day forward. She was the one I always looked up to, and as long as she was around I always knew I would be taken care of and safe. No matter what happened in life I always had my sister. When we became a little older and she started hanging out with her friends, I would tag along with her.

Even though she didn't always want her little sister there, she would always give in and end up letting me go with her.

I always went everywhere with her, so when she would move in with our mom I was right there with her, moving in also. And when she would go back to our grandma's house, I was once again with her. I always knew that I was safe if I was with my sister because she would never ever let anything happen to me. I grew up my whole life being known as, "Oh, you're Crystal's sister."

Yes, we were sisters and we did act like sisters, so we didn't always get along. We did have our fights and arguments and, yes, we did do messed-up stuff to each other, but at the end of the day she was my blood and my big sister.

She was way more to me than just my sister. She was – and still is – my best friend, my mom, my protector, my heart and so much more to me.

Crystal was an amazing woman.

She was a sister, a daughter, a granddaughter, a niece, a friend, a fiancée, and most importantly she was a mother to five beautiful children who she loved more than anything.

The hardest thing that I have ever had to do is say goodbye to my sister. I never would have thought in a million years that I would have to go through something like this at such a young age. We were supposed to get through all this together and fight this demon together.

When I say me and my sister did everything together, I mean we did *everything* together. I mean we even did jail time together. We also had our first child in the same year. She had her daughter in the beginning of the year and I had my son at the end of the year, but they were still born in the same year.

When I came out to the street life back in 2016, my sister was in jail and my dad told her what I was doing. She wrote me a letter begging me to stop and not go down that path, but I didn't listen to her. All I did was cry and then fold it up and put it in the backseat of my car.

Not too long after that I ended up getting into a relationship with – come to find out – one of my sister's exes. But I went to go and visit her and told her who I was with and gave her a phone number so she could get a hold of me.

When she got out of jail, instead of staying on the road to recovery she came back to the streets to protect me. She said that she wouldn't be able to live with herself knowing that I was in the streets without her. So, she came back out here and made it known to everyone that crossed our path that I was her sister and if they messed with me then they had to deal with her.

Me and Crystal have been through a lot together, from childhood to adulthood. We have had our ups and downs, but I can say that no matter what, when I needed her she was always there. All I had to do was say, sissy I need you, and she was there.

I also want to make it very clear to everyone that she was clean. There was NO DRUGS found in her system when she was killed. I know how hard it was for her but she was fighting every day.

I will never forget the last day that I seen her. She was fighting so hard to stay clean and it makes me feel so good to know that she pushed through the cravings she was having that day. I am very proud of my sister. That's the reason why I'm going to continue my fight on the road of

recovery: to make her proud of me the way I am proud of her. My sister is the strongest woman I will ever know.

Life is going to be hard without her, I already know that, but I also know that she wouldn't want me to ever give up. She would want me to move forward and keep fighting so that's what I am going to do. ●

Originally published in Groundcover News August 2018

Crystal Ludwig (above) cared for and protected her sister Tabitha until passing away in June 2018. Tabitha leans on Crystal (below) as their cousin April looks on.



Who will?

ROBERT W.

Groundcover vendor No. 358

Who will remember me?

Will they remember the good I've done?

Will they remember I've changed for the good?

Or will they remember all of the bad, the flaws and the ugly?

Who will remember me?

I will never forget you, whoever you are!

You're changed for the good and you no longer hang with the blind not the blind who can't see but the ones leading into destruction.

Who will remember You!?

Originally published in Groundcover News January, 2019

THANK YOU FOR EXPRESSING YOUR
HOLIDAY GENEROSITY
TO THE GROUNDCOVER NEWS VENDORS.



If you would like to also
bless the organization,
you can make a donation:

Send us a check at 423 S. 4th Ave.,
Ann Arbor, MI, 48104

or use the Donate button at
groundcovernews.org